

Reflections on August 2010 Internship Field-based Activities

As a practicing Director of Technology in La Vernia ISD, my Internship activities are naturally somewhat different from those of the typical student. After discussing the best course of action with Dr. Abernathy, we agreed that under the guidance of my Mentor, LVISD Superintendent Dr. Tom Harvey, I would pick tasks that I perform as a part of my duties, but examine them with a critical eye towards which ISTE Technology Facilitator (TF) Standards and Performance Indicator they address. Additionally, two separate, special technology tasks are designated as Internship Projects.

August was a busy month with the usual start of school activities, departmental school-year kickoff meetings, and the ongoing work on my Special Ed Virtualization and Virtual Desktop Internship Project. I also presented multiple inservice training sessions to my teachers, equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to utilize our new District txGradebook online grade book system.

I realized while planning my Internship Project that I must constantly support and articulate the District's educational technology vision if I am to have any chance at managing the process of change; change must be justified, and consistent with known goals, if it is to be accepted. Williamson and Redish (2009) demonstrate the long-term need for technologists to articulate and evangelize the educational technology vision as they observe that "In addition to helping the school community develop an appropriate, research-based vision for technology use, leaders must sustain the community's focus on this vision until it becomes entrenched in the local culture" (p. 179).

As I prepared to provide training to my teachers on the proper use of LVISD's new txGradebook software, I was reminded of the observation of Solomon and Schrum (2007) that

“We often provide ‘just in case’ training rather than ‘just in time’ training, which provides educators with information they need just as they need it” (p. 103). As a companion to the txGradebook training, I launched my new LVISD Technology Blog available to all teachers and staff at <http://lvisdtechnology.blogspot.com/>. This blog provides access to user guides, pictorial illustrations of logon sequences, and other guidance related to using District technology resources. Providing teacher training, and launching my blog, helped me master the requirements of ISTE Standard TF-VIII, Leadership and Vision, which I meet by contributing to the shared vision for integration of technology at the campus, and fostering an environment and culture conducive to the realization of the campus and District vision.

This month I also attended my first meeting of the District Assessment Team. This team, made up of teachers and administrators, is tasked with determining the appropriate methods and tools to use to gather student performance data, and then using that data to improve instruction. Ultimately, this data will give direction to campus and District improvement initiatives. As Harris, Edmonson and Combs (2010) explain, “Once you have analyzed data, developed deeper understanding, engaged in self-reflection, and explored patterns, then you and your campus should determine what direction to take” (p. 69). This activity helped me meet all the Performance Indicators under Standard TF-IV, Assessment and Evaluation, as I endeavor to apply technology in order to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluation strategies.

While reflecting on the month’s activities, I gained a deeper understanding of the way my teachers view assessment; there are multiple viewpoints and levels of understanding, but the majority seem to understand that assessment is an essential part of learning, and that the assessment, and the learning it is to measure, must be designed and understood before designing learning activities. This connects to my past learning as it embodies the concept of Backward

Design that was covered during my class work, in other words, planning instruction with assessment in mind. My future learning has been impacted by the need evidenced during the Assessment Team meeting to find better methods to help my teachers assess ongoing learning; while student benchmark testing was the predominant method discussed during the meeting, I tend to lean towards project-based and performance-based assessment, making use of eportfolios available through Project Share. I must therefore learn from other districts that are utilizing performance-based assessment, and discover proven ways to introduce these concepts to my teachers while demonstrating that adopting these techniques is not as difficult or time-consuming as they may think.

Viewing my performance on this month's tasks from an educator's point of view, I learned that the LVISD Technology Blog was a great advantage in providing an opportunity for further learning for my teachers, offering them "just in time" assistance with using technology. Just as teachers provide follow-up lessons in a variety of formats for their students, I will continue to use blogs and will start using wikis to provide ongoing multimedia-enhanced, differentiated technology instruction to my teachers, supporting 24/7 professional development.

My performance during the txConnect training task was impacted by my lack of familiarity with some of the attendance and grading rules our teachers follow, and I was therefore unable to provide concrete answers without further research when they inquired regarding posting procedures for their campus. Based on these activities and my investigations, I will take a more thorough knowledge of our grading and attendance procedures to future contexts, helping me better assist teachers in using our online grading and attendance tools.

As a learner, I gained a new respect for the effort that goes into developing assessment; as the teachers hashed out the procedures and routines for benchmark testing, it was obvious that

any assessment strategy takes a lot of work behind the scenes, giving me new respect for the role and service of the District Assessment Team.

I was effective as a learner as I applied my recent July learning on how to use txGradebook to teaching this subject to my teachers during the August inservice sessions, demonstrating knowledge transfer to new situations. I will continue to transfer my learning to new situations as I provide ongoing support and training to my teachers on the use of online grading and attendance systems, particularly as I help them prepare for the activation of our txConnect Parent Portal, enabling parents to view student attendance and progress information with more detail than previously available.

As a lifelong learner, I must perform further research regarding best practices for helping my teachers adopt performance-based and project-based learning evidenced through the use of electronic portfolios; as TEA's Project Share is implemented in the coming weeks and months, both teachers and students will have access to a Statewide eportfolio system, and I must be ready to support them in the process of change.

References:

- Williamson, J. & Redish, T. (2009). *Technology Facilitation and Leadership Standards: What Every K-12 Leader Should Know and Be Able To Do*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Solomon, G. & Schrum, L. (2007). *Web 2.0: New Tools, New Schools*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Harris, S., Edmonson, S. & Combs, J. (2010). *Examining What We Do To Improve Our Schools: 8 Steps from Analysis to Action*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

